

**"SHALL THE SABBATH BE GIVEN UP?"**

Were this question asked of our readers individually we have no doubt that they would all say emphatically, "No!" Some, it may be, would refer to the experiment made by France some years ago, when that country decided to give up the Sabbath, and found that from an economical standpoint it had to return at least to its nominal observance. No doubt we would be reminded that carefully made tests have shown that men and beasts of toil and even machinery need a rest of one day in seven. Of course many would say that we have no right to give up the Sabbath because it is of God's appointment.

But the fact is that as a people we are giving up the Sabbath very rapidly. This is not being done avowedly, and yet it is really being done. There has been no open or concerted action taken looking to this end, but there has been a gradual one, and it is a growing process, and growing very rapidly. This has been brought about by carelessness and indifference on the part of many of God's people in not drawing distinctly the line between what may properly be done on the Sabbath and what may not be done. Things are done at first which seem to be no more than doubtful. In this, the great principle is overlooked that the doing of that which is doubtful is a sin. But, unfortunately, many have gone far beyond the doubtful point, and are doing things which in their own hearts they know to be wrong, and yet are trying to find excuses for doing them.

This destroying of the Sabbath is brought about in connection with business and with pleasure. We ought never to forget the great principle so admirably expressed in the Shorter Catechism which gives the teachings of the Scriptures on this subject. "The Sabbath is to be sanctified by a holy resting all that day even from such worldly employments and recreations as are lawful on other days, and spending the whole time in public and private exercises of God's worship, except so much as is taken up in the works of necessity and mercy."

Labor under present conditions is a curse which God imposed upon man immediately following his fall in Eden, when He said, "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread." God in His mercy, however, gave one day in seven when men are to be free from the effects of this curse. On this day He intended that man should lay aside his work and rest.

In considering the question of rest, we ought to remember that this applies not only to ourselves but to others as well. If we rest from our work, and cause others to work for us, we are just as guilty as though we worked ourselves. This should be borne in mind when we are tempted to indulge in pleasure of any kind which involves work on the part of others.

Rest, however, does not mean idleness. The fact is that our brains are never idle, and if they are not directed into proper channels of thought, they will invariably lead us into sin. God gives us the Sabbath in which to worship Him, and he who does not keep this thought prominently in mind throughout the day is coming very far short of doing what he ought to do, and what God requires. To begin with, we ought to be very careful to avoid anything that interferes with worship. No man has any more right to break himself down by labor on Saturday, so that he is not physically able to go to church on Sunday than he is to work on Sunday. The things that interfere with public or private worship of God on Sunday are very insidious in their character. One of the most common causes of this interference es-

pecially in towns and cities, is the Sunday newspaper. The Sunday paper keeps many men and boys, as well as women, away from the house of God, because of the work which is involved in publishing and distributing them, but a great many more people are kept away by reading it, and those who do go to church after reading the paper are not likely to have their minds and hearts in the proper spirit for true worship.

Riding for pleasure and social visiting and traveling are other causes which tend to destroy the sanctity of the Sabbath. The habit of giving a part or the whole of the Sabbath to work is growing very rapidly in this country. Many business men go to their office or require their employees to go and attend to business of various kinds on this day. Any one going into the business section of a city, especially passing the post office, will see what a great number of people get their mail and go to their office on Sunday.

The violation of the Sabbath is probably greater, certainly more noticeable in cities and towns than in the country, and yet the desecration of this holy day is growing in almost all country communities. Much work is done that need not be done, and many things are allowed to interfere with the proper observance of the Sabbath which can be avoided.

The Christian Church needs to wake up to the fact that the Sabbath is essential to Christianity. Without the Sabbath there would soon be no Christian religion, and without the Christian religion the world will be lost.

**TESTING TIMES.**

A new bridge was built over a rushing stream. The engineers had finished their work, and the structure seemed complete and beautiful. Did the precious passenger trains rush over it at once? No. First, a car and then an engine and then a train of cars and then a loaded train at slow speed and then a heavier train at higher speed; all the while the engineers were watching to see the effect of the strain.

What was the purport of it all? Were these men trying to destroy the work of their brains and hands for so many months? No. They were trying to find out the weak points, to correct them.

Every year or two and sometimes oftener that bridge was carefully tested to see what effect the strain was having on its structure. A perfect bridge for the work of the world was what the engineer was after, and he found it necessary to apply severe tests in order to discover any faults and so to correct them.

God's business is making lives fit for the Master's use. Ready for the perfect environment of the perfect Home. That is what God is busy about now.

Sin has sowed the human life with faults. Defects are hidden beneath handsome exteriors. Flaws are in the truest steel. They must be hunted out and taken away.

In this work man is co-operative. His nature is such that he must stand with God in this work. He is not exactly a dumb, dead thing of steel. He is a living, pulsing, rational, willing creature. He must do his part. Man will never give up the faulty part without a clear pointing out of the consequences; without a struggle and a striving to hold on to our weakness. They are our pets. We do not wish them away. Often their dangerous and hideous natures are unseen by us.

We must be made to feel that this delusion is corroding our lives, eating out the fibre of our souls, and bringing terrible results upon ourselves and it may be, on others.

Nothing so corrodes our lives, and often unconsciously than covetousness. Loving the things of the world more than we ought. This is the Christian's weakest spot. Self-preservation seems to demand that we hoard and hold on to the perishing lest we perish ourselves. Not only does it become the first law of nature in point of time, but also the first in importance. Not only a law of nature, but, one, we piously transplant into the realm of grace. "Caring for our own," we translate to mean "caring for ourselves." To this love of accumulation we sacrifice every generous impulse, every laudable deed of unselfish love, every high instinct of our nature, 'til our lives are in danger of deadly corrosion. Then a sudden calamity comes across our lives. We see where our penuriousness has chilled and killed the little plants of affection; gradually rifted us apart from lives that were closely knit to ours, and then the long life of close-fisted living within ourselves, rises up to smite us in the face, and wreck our happiness.

God is saying, "I will show you how rotting, covetousness is to the fibre of your soul, so you will co-operate with me in taking it out and putting in the solid beam of generosity."

The love of enjoyment for itself; even innocent enjoyment, weakens our spiritual powers. "Oh, have a good time"; as if that were the end of life. What a mistake that is. Life is more than a series of thrills. But we will have it. It is so sweet to our taste.

Nothing is so destructive of usefulness. Not even a business man would give a job to a man who is living for enjoyment. Why should God do so? So it comes to pass that the most useless creature in the Kingdom of God is the Christian who is giving herself over to a round of parties and pleasures. They become spiritually unfit. They may put up a great show of energy and bustling activity, but results show failure. Bridges are made for use, and the bridge that gives itself up to pleasurable sensations will be useless for the purpose of carrying safely the transportation of a great line.

So God comes on, and turns these pleasures into gall and bitterness 'till we see their danger with disgust in our souls for them.

God is trying to get the weakening girder out that He may put the sturdy beam of service in.

This is the secret of Providence. She does not come to us with gloved hand, or condoning voice. She strips off the false covering, the veneer, the paint that covers the rust and discloses to friend and foe alike and especially to our own eyes, the weakness and faultiness of our lives. The engineer who covers the cracked girder with a coat of paint is an enemy to man. God never hides things.

This is the answer to the question, "Why should I have to suffer this, to undergo this affliction, endure this cruel loss?" Why? Because you are the one who needs just this to make you what God wants you to be, and what your highest good demands. It is not the hand of punishment, nor is it evidence that Satan has gotten the best of God in your life. It is the hand of God; not always gentle, because gentle means have failed in your case, but sometimes, hard and stern, but it is always the hand of the One who knows what is best and is trying to get you to see it in that way.

Are you in the midst of your testing time? Give yourself over into the wise hand of your Father, the great Engineer.

Have you had no tests; do not flatter yourself that you do not need them.